"Discovering Delaware's Maritime Past"

(DOVER, Del.—June 12, 2015)—The First State's essential relationship with the Delaware River and Bay, and the sea, will be brought to life during the 17th annual Chautauqua tent show, "Discovering Delaware's Maritime Past." Events and programs will take place at a variety of downtown Lewes, Del. locations including the Zwaanendael Museum and the Lewes Historical Society from June 21 to 25, 2015. Admission is free and open to the public. Go here for a complete listing of activities. For additional information, call 302-645-1148.

Christian Johnson will portray Gov. William Augustus Newell, founder of the U.S. Life-Saving Service, on June 24, 2015.

A unique mixture of education and entertainment, Lewes' Chautauqua will be held under a large tent and will be headlined by re-enactors from the [American Historical Theatre](#) who will take on the personas of celebrated historical figures, educating and entertaining audiences as they bring the past to life. Audience members are encouraged to ask questions and interact with the featured characters who will include American-Revolutionary-War-era sea captain Gideon Olmstead; enslaved African-American poet Phillis Wheatley discussing her voyage to Britain; Gov. William Augustus Newell, founder of U.S. Life-Saving Service; and first lady Abigail Adams discussing trade and embargoes during the American Revolution. The Chautauqua will also feature several family-friendly events including "Songs and Stories of Old Sailing Days," "Run It Up the Flagpole and Sea" and the Pyrates Royale Duo; plus a new display at the Zwaanendael Museum on His Majesty's Sloop of War DeBraak, a British warship that sank off the Delaware coast on May 25, 1798.

Matthew Dodd will present the family-friendly program "Songs and Stories of Old Sailing Days" on June

Chautauqua takes its name from a series of adult education programs that were first held at a campsite on the shores of Lake Chautauqua in upstate New York during the late-19th century. Chautauquas spread throughout America in the late-19th and early-20th centuries bringing speakers, teachers, musicians, entertainers, preachers and specialists of the day to a wide cross-section of the nation's rural and small-town population. Circuit Chautauquas (also known as Tent Chautauquas) were an itinerant manifestation of the movement. Programs would be presented in tents pitched in a field near town. After several days, the Chautauqua would fold its tents and move on to the next community. The popularity of Chautauquas peaked in the mid-1920s, after which radio, movies and automobiles brought about the gradual disappearance of the movement by the 1940s.

Model of His Majesty's Sloop of War DeBraak. Part of a new display at the Zwaanendael Museum.

Reborn in the 1970s as a vehicle for humanities education, modern Chautauquas are organized around a core program in which re-enactors portray celebrated historical figures, speaking and interacting with audiences, often in the setting

of a large outdoor tent. Modern Chautauquas have been presented annually in Delaware since 1999 featuring a wide variety of historical figures including Abraham Lincoln; Amelia Earhart; Dolley Madison; Eleanor Roosevelt; Edgar Allan Poe; the Lone Ranger; John Philip Sousa; and Delaware's own Pvt. James Elbert, Maj. Allen McLane, F.O.C. Darley and Clifford Brown.

Kim Hanley will portray first lady Abigail Adams on June 25, 2015.

Delaware's 2015 Chautauqua is partially funded by a grant from the [Delaware Humanities Forum](), a state program of the National Endowment for the Humanities. It is being presented as a partnership between the Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs, the Lewes Historical Society and the Lewes Chamber of Commerce. Additional financial support is provided by the Delaware Heritage Commission, Delmarva Power and Sussex County Council under the auspices of Councilwoman Joan Deaver.